

Chapter Two

Planning And Development Activity Since Plan Adoption

SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC PROJECTS & UNDERTAKINGS BETWEEN 1994-1999

Planning or construction of several significant city and regional projects has occurred since the Northgate Plan was adopted.

- **Thornton Creek Watershed Improvements & Planning** – SPU has spent over \$9 million in the Thornton Creek watershed on planning and constructing drainage improvements since 1995, and has dedicated over \$5 million for flood control and drainage improvements along Thornton Creek over the next few years. Integrated improvements to both prevent flooding and improve creek habitat are addressed in the Drainage Capital Improvement Program. Over the past three years, SPU has collaborated with the community to develop a Thornton Creek Watershed Action Plan (\$400,000 budget) and has conducted studies of the watershed hydrology. See the drainage section in Chapter 3 for further discussion.
- **Seattle Center Renewal/Neighborhood Centers Levy** – In 1999, Seattle voters approved a levy for community centers that includes a new 20,000 sq. ft. full-service community center in the Northgate area. The project cost is estimated at \$8.2 million including acquisition of land. Final size of the community center will be determined at the time siting and acquisition decisions are made. The center is scheduled to be completed in 2004. The Executive and City Council are currently seeking to advance the schedule for siting the community center to benefit from the library's siting process.
- **"Libraries for All" Ballot Measure** - In November 1998, this bond measure was approved by a large majority. As a result, Northgate will receive a new 10,000-square-foot library under provisions of the "Libraries for All" building program. The new branch will have a capacity for more than 30,000 books, seating for up to 100 patrons, reading and homework areas for children and youth, adult reference and study areas, computer work stations, instructional spaces and a multi-purpose meeting room for community use. The \$5.1 million branch is scheduled to open in 2004. A new library will offer direct service to this area and benefit residents of the nearby Maple Leaf, Victory Heights, Haller Lake, and Pinehurst neighborhoods, and help to give the community a strong new civic focus. The Seattle Public Library is expected to make siting decisions for the Northgate branch this year.
- **Major Subarea Transportation Improvements** – Among the most important transportation improvements were the completion of a new on-ramp to Interstate 5 at 1st Avenue NE/NE 107th Street. This allows northbound traffic to enter I-5 directly from the Northgate Mall without passing through the 1st Avenue NE/Northgate Way intersection. That intersection was reconfigured to disallow left turns from westbound Northgate Way. These changes helped ease congestion at this location.

Construction will soon occur to convert a portion of the existing Metro 5th Avenue NE park-and-ride to a new street, NE 112th Street, to connect 3rd and 5th Avenues NE. This is a limited-size yet important addition to the street infrastructure of the Northgate core, that will help provide access to the Touchstone (“Northgate North”) commercial development that is under construction, and provide alternative access to/from the 3rd Avenue NE area north of Northgate Way. Also planned to occur is closure of 3rd Avenue NE at NE 115th Street to create a cul-de-sac that will eliminate the possibility of commercial-oriented traffic through the single-family residential area at NE 115th Street. This will fulfill a specific improvement request under Implementation Guideline 10.4.F of the Northgate Plan, and support the policy of protection of residential areas from intrusive through-traffic.

SEATLAN is conducting an improvement project for Northgate Way between Meridian Avenue N. and 15th Avenue NE, to upgrade the signal system, provide emergency vehicle pre-emption, and paving improvements. This project is primarily oriented toward congestion relief and safety.

Other improvements include the recent installation of a traffic signal at 5th Avenue NE/NE 92nd Street, and various neighborhood traffic controls added to neighborhood areas over the past six years.

- **Sound Transit** – The Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan promotes transit improvements to reduce dependence upon automobiles, and assumes that a regional high capacity system will be located in the Northgate core. Two ballot measures relating to regional transit went before the voters since 1993. The first measure failed in March 1995. In November 1996, Puget Sound voters approved *Sound Move* - the 10 year regional transit plan. While not funded in the measure, the regional transit plan includes a light rail segment connecting the University District to Northgate. Both the City and Sound Transit support construction of a light-rail station and rail facilities reaching Northgate during Phase I of the light-rail construction, which would increase the system’s overall ridership by more than 20,000 daily riders. However, the financing and schedule of this portion of the light rail system are still unresolved, due to funding, planning and political uncertainties. When funded, service to Northgate could begin by approximately 2006-2008. In 2000, Seattle’s Station Area Planning Team will conduct station area planning in the Northgate and Roosevelt neighborhoods.
- **Major Institutions Planning & Activity** – The Northgate planning area is home to two major institutions – North Seattle Community College and Northwest Hospital. Northwest Hospital Master Plan was adopted in 1991 and has had only minor amendments since it was adopted. Some development has occurred at the hospital consistent with that Plan, and a medical office and garage proposal is pending. The City Council approved a new master plan for North Seattle Community College (NSCC) in January 1995. Since the approval of that master plan, the college has undergone significant development activity including a new childcare building, gym, high technology learning center, and new parking. NSCC is striving to provide an

expanded orientation to the needs of the surrounding community. Several facilities and services, including child care, athletic facilities, meeting rooms, and cultural and educational activities are available to residents.

- **Neighborhood Planning in Adjacent Areas** - The Northgate Plan, adopted by the City Council in August 1993, served as a prototype in many respects for Seattle's Comprehensive Plan: *Towards a Sustainable Seattle, A Plan for Managing Growth 1994-2014*, which was adopted in July 1994. The provisions of the Northgate Plan were used to guide the growth targets and boundaries established for the Northgate Urban Center in the City-wide Comprehensive Plan. Adoption of the citywide Comprehensive Plan to meet the provisions of the state Growth Management Act led to a major undertaking to develop neighborhood plans for areas targeted for growth.

From 1995-1998, 37 eligible neighborhoods undertook participatory planning efforts to develop 20-year plans for their areas. Three of the neighborhood plans have planning boundaries that include portions of the Northgate Plan study area: North Neighborhoods, Aurora-Licton Springs, and Broadview-Bitter Lake-Haller Lake (see Figure 1 for boundaries of other overlapping neighborhood planning areas).

The type of outreach conducted for the Northgate Plan was different than the participation afforded by the four-year process developed to prepare the 37 other neighborhood plans. However, the cooperative efforts of the Northgate Plan Advisory Committee, along with the extensive interaction of City staff with community councils and other interested parties over nearly four years, afforded a high degree of community participation in plan development. Comments gathered during the EIS process, subsequent EIS appeal, and later Council hearings, afforded other opportunities for public comment that informed the City Council's decisions.

OTHER RECENT ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Economic Influences on Commercial Development

Trends in the national and regional economy directly and indirectly affect personal spending at individual businesses. Simply put, as the region's business and employment opportunities grow, population grows, wages increase, and more money is spent by residents for goods and services, increasing the ability of the area to support individual businesses.

Since adoption of the Northgate Plan in 1993, the regional and national economies recovered from a recession and generated significant economic growth, particularly during the last two or three years. This has contributed to strong employment and population growth, increased housing demand throughout the region, and increased consumer spending. The Northgate area and broader North Seattle area have participated in these trends.

Insert Figure 1

Northgate Area Planning designations – Overlap with other neighborhood planning areas

Economic conditions also affect the ability to obtain financing to develop new commercial facilities. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, lenders were wary of financing many types of commercial development, such as office buildings and large-scale retail projects. Subsequently, new office and commercial development was relatively slow in the region during this period, except for certain categories such as “big-box” retail and chain retail stores. Due to the strength of the regional and national economies and advantageous interest rates in the mid- and late-1990s, lenders became more willing to finance new commercial and residential multifamily development. As a result, new commercial and residential development has become more financially feasible for property owners and developers over the past few years.

In the Northgate vicinity, new commercial development was relatively slow during the mid-1990s, but is expected to increase in pace. New commercial development activity over the last six years consisted of approximately seven new commercial retail or office buildings and three relatively small expansions of existing facilities. There were also numerous changes in use of existing commercial facilities. These reflect new ventures by business owners to serve the resident population with goods and services. Larger-scale commercial development, such as that underway at the Touchstone (or “Northgate North”) site and planned at the Northgate Mall, is evidence that current economic conditions favor new commercial development. In addition to economic conditions, other factors, including the timing of high-capacity transit systems (such as light rail) will affect future decisions to undertake new commercial development.

Growth in Senior Housing Needs

The growth in senior-age population is contributing to an increasing need for senior-oriented housing opportunities. Some newer senior-oriented housing offers apartment-style living supplemented by medical services and amenities. The two largest new residential developments in the Northgate area since 1993 are senior housing serving this demand. Both of these new developments are located in the core of Northgate, close to transit and shopping areas. The proximity of medical facilities, such as the Group Health clinic and Northwest Hospital, is also an asset to senior residents.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH SINCE PLAN ADOPTION

Housing Growth

Relationship to Urban Center Growth Targets

The City's 1994 Comprehensive Plan established residential growth targets for the urban centers and urban villages, including a target for the Northgate Urban Center of 3,000 new households by 2014. Between mid-1994 (following the City's Comprehensive Plan adoption) and mid-1999, the net residential growth within the Northgate Urban Center was 175 new units, or approximately six percent of the 20-year growth target (the 124-unit retirement complex was not counted because it was completed in 1993). This rate of growth is similar to the performance of about half of the City's urban villages and centers, but is considered to be relatively slow. According to the City's growth monitoring criteria (in response to Policy L61 of the City's Comprehensive Plan), the Northgate Urban Center grew slowly because it did not achieve 10 percent of its residential growth target in the first five years of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Construction of a new library and community center, and possibly a park, are public investments in amenities that may help attract additional residential growth. This growth, especially within the Urban Center, would help promote the goals of the Northgate Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

Faster citywide growth is projected over the next several years, and there are known prospects for additional multifamily growth in at least two locations in the Northgate planning area. The Mall General Development Plan included plans for approximately 150 to 450 new multifamily residences, and preliminary plans for the Mullally property (immediately north of Northgate Way between 1st and 3rd Avenues NE) reportedly include approximately 900 new multifamily residences. The latter project would require demolition of the existing 207 multifamily residences on the site. Currently active permits (approved but not yet built) authorize 13 additional housing units in the planning area.

Net Housing Growth in the Northgate Overlay District

During the study period, there was net housing growth of approximately 596 dwelling units in the Northgate Overlay District (the larger area including areas inside and outside the Urban Center).¹ A large portion (nearly 40 percent) of this growth occurred with two senior retirement housing projects: a 124-unit complex on 5th Avenue NE north of Northgate Way in 1993, and a 106-unit complex on 3rd Avenue NE north of Northgate Way in 1997 (see Figure 2). Table 2-1 illustrates the annual growth by housing type. Approximately 23 percent of the net housing growth occurred in single-family construction, 8 percent in multifamily structures with 2-9 units, and 69 percent in multifamily structures with 10 units and greater.

¹ Net housing growth consists of all new construction of residential housing units, including single-family homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, apartments, condominiums, additions to existing residential structures, and senior retirement homes. Residential demolitions are also included in the data. The data recognize housing growth when the permit authorizing construction is "finalized", meaning that construction is completed.

Insert Figure 2
New Multifamily Units 1990-99

Table 2-1
Net Residential Housing Growth in the Northgate Planning Area, 1993 to 1999

Units per Structure	Net Number of New Dwelling Units							TOTAL
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	
Single Family	22	15	12	27	15	21	26	138
Duplex	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	5
3-4 units	-	-	4	-	-	12	-	16
5-9 units	-	-	24	-	-	-	4	28
10-19 units	17	44	69	15	-	15	-	160
20-49 units	-	-	-	-	-	19	-	19
50-99 units	-	-	-	-	106	-	-	106
100+ units	124	-	-	-	-	-	-	124
TOTAL	163	64	109	42	121	67	30	596

Note: Units per structure categories reflect the number of new units built in each new structure. A few developments contained more than one structure. Net growth data account for demolished units. Source: DCLU, SPO, 1999.

Development of duplexes and multifamily structures up to 9 units in size was sporadic, occurring primarily in 1995 and 1998. Approximately one to three larger multifamily structures (10+ units/structure) were developed annually.

A majority of the residential growth in the Northgate Overlay District occurred within the Urban Center defined by the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Urban Center consists of the primarily commercial area between NE 115th Street to the north, NE 94th Street to the south, 12th Avenue NE to the east, and Burke Avenue N. to the west, as well as Northwest Hospital. Between 1993 and mid-1999, approximately 55 percent (325 of 596 dwelling units) of Northgate's net housing growth occurred within the Urban Center. Table 2-2 summarizes growth inside and outside of the Urban Center.

Table 2-2
Multifamily Projects Within and Outside the Northgate Urban Center

Within the Urban Center	# of Units	Outside of the Urban Center	# of Units
Senior housing		East of I-5	
--11030 5 th Avenue NE	124	--9400 Roosevelt Way NE	18
--11301 3 rd Avenue NE	106	--12329 Roosevelt Way NE	60
East of I-5		--12549 Roosevelt Way NE	13
--1018 NE 112 th St.	9	--11532 15 th Avenue NE	20
--9520 1 st Avenue NE	25	--12050 15 th Avenue NE	16
West of I-5		--102 NE 94 th St.	5
--2117 N. 107 th St.	12		
--2113 N. 107 th	16		
--10621 Bagley Ave. N.	15	Miscellaneous Other	
Miscellaneous Other Multifamily	<u>19</u>	Multifamily	<u>15</u>
TOTAL	325		147

Note: This list shows gross numbers of units (not counting demolitions). Thus, total of these projects plus single-family homes is greater than the net housing growth of 596 units discussed in the text.

Outside the Urban Center, approximately six multifamily structures larger than duplexes were constructed between 1993 and mid-1999, accounting for approximately 130 new dwelling units. These developments added density to areas already characterized by local groupings of commercial and multifamily residential uses.

New single-family construction comprised approximately 23 percent (138 dwelling units) of the net housing growth between 1993 and 1999. This growth was relatively evenly distributed among the single-family neighborhoods, and occurred throughout the 6-year period, ranging from 12 to 27 units of growth annually. The data include recognition of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in existing homes, which increased following the City's amendment of ADU regulations in 1996. In addition to housing construction, there were also 32 applications for short platting of single-family lots, where existing larger lots are divided into smaller lots. These short plats resulted in creation of approximately 65 additional lots, most of which led to new residential construction. Demolition included approximately five to ten single-family homes per year, most of which were replaced with new single-family homes.

Commercial Development Activity

Between mid-1993 and 1999, there were approximately 99 master use permit (MUP) applications for land use actions not related to residential development (see Figure 3, and Table 2-3 for a complete listing of these applications). Approximately seven of these applications were for new commercial or retail structures, three were for new office structures, one was for a new mixed-use office/residential structure, two were for additions to warehouse and auto repair facilities, and one was for expansion of a dental office. Proposals for new private development or expansion of commercial structures included the following, listed according to their status:

Constructed Projects

- the QFC store at Roosevelt Way/Northgate Way (1993, approved as part of Northgate Plan legislation, Ord. 116794);
- the Men's Wearhouse at 5th Avenue NE/Northgate Way (1994);
- the Northwest Federal Credit Union bank/office building near Meridian Avenue NE/Northgate Way (1994);
- the two-story Windermere Realty office building at NE 100th Street/3rd Avenue NE (1995);
- an auto repair shop addition near NE 85th Street/17th Avenue NE (1997);
- the Walgreen's drugstore at Roosevelt Way/Northgate Way (1997);
- a 7,700 square-foot warehouse addition at Lake City Way/NE 100th Street (1997);
- a dental office expansion at 15th Avenue NE/NE 117th Street (1998);

Projects Under Construction

- the 325,000 square-foot Touchstone commercial retail complex on Northgate Way between 3rd and 5th Avenues NE (1999, under construction);

- a 10,000 square-foot commercial retail structure near 8th Avenue NE/Northgate Way (1999, under construction);

Projects Still Under Review or in Court

- Northgate Mall General Development Plan (1999, approved twice, currently a Superior Court decision is being appealed by City);
- reconstruction of a Safeway at 125th Street/15th Avenue NE (1998, still under review, includes a request for rezone of single-family properties);
- a mixed-use office/residential structure (including 35 multifamily units) on 15th Avenue NE north of NE 123rd Street (1999, still under design review);
- a 7,700 square-foot communications utility/office building replacing another commercial structure at NE 89th Street/Roosevelt Way (1999, still under review);
- a four-level medical office building and five-level parking garage at Northwest Hospital (2000, still under review);

Approved But Never Built

- a two-story office products store near 3rd Ave. NE/Northgate Way (1995, never built).

The commercial projects that are built or under construction represent approximately 60,000 square feet of new office space and 440,000 square feet of new retail space (of which approximately 350,000 square feet is due to the Touchstone development). This growth is a little more than the “low estimate” of growth assumed for the year 2000 in the EIS for the Northgate Plan, and well below the EIS’s “expected estimate” of approximately 1.5 million square feet of office and retail space.

Table 2-3
Summary of DCLU Commercial Land Use Applications, mid-1993 to 1999

Type of Project	7- to 12- 1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
New retail/commercial construction	1	1	1*	-	1	1**	2	7
New office construction	-	1	1	-	-	-	2**	4
Comm./office additions	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	3
Change of use	7	7	5	12	4	4	2	41
Antenna installation	-	-	-	2	8	1	4	15
Misc. minor projects	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	4
Rezoning	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	3
General Develop. Plan	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Recognize existing use	2	1	-	1	1	-	1	6
Parking lot/auto access	-	-	1	2	-	1	1	5
Institutional new structures & renovations	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	3
Environmental permits	-	-	1	2	1	2	1	7
TOTAL	11	10	10	20	18	15	15	99

* = Approved but not built

** = Active permits still under review, as of Feb. 2000

Source: DCLU, 2000.

Insert Figure 3

Permit applications for commercial development and changes in use

Approximately 41 applications were for change-of-use permits, indicating a change in type of business occupying commercial spaces. Typical examples of changes in use during the study period include: conversions of restaurant space to retail uses, auto repair shop to food processing/retail use, and medical services office to retail use. This category also includes internal remodels, such as the food court construction in the Northgate Mall. At a couple of other locations, office and health care facilities were changed to school uses.

Other commercial land use applications included a 1998 rezone request (Midrise to Neighborhood Commercial) to facilitate construction of the Touchstone development, a 1993 contract rezone at the Roosevelt Way QFC site, a non-approved 1996 rezone request on a split-zoned site on 15th Avenue NE, the Northgate Mall General Development Plan proposal (1998), and approximately 15 antenna installations.

Institutional development activity included at least one classroom addition, construction of a new surface parking lot and two buildings at North Seattle Community College, conversion of a nursing home to private school, and an expansion of a church.

Employment Growth

Employment data were obtained from the Washington State Employment Security Department for the period between 1995 and 1998. During this period, “covered” employment in the Northgate Urban Center grew from approximately 7,400 employees to 8,900 employees, a 20 percent increase. This is a faster employment growth rate than for the city as a whole (see below). Most of Northgate’s employment growth (approximately 1,200 employees) occurred in the services sector, including financial, insurance, real estate and other similar businesses. Retail employment grew by approximately 200 employees, and there were slight gains in manufacturing, construction, transportation, communication and utilities employment. This employment growth achieved approximately 16 percent of the Comprehensive Plan’s 20-year employment growth target of 9,300 new jobs by 2014 for the Northgate Urban Center. This growth is relatively close to the employment growth projected by the City for the Northgate Urban Center in this period.

During the same period, employment grew 50,000 jobs for the city as a whole, for a total of approximately 468,000 jobs (12 percent growth over 1995 levels). This growth exceeded the City’s predictions for this period, achieving approximately 34 percent of the Comprehensive Plan’s citywide 20-year employment growth target. Employment growth was primarily concentrated in the Downtown, Duwamish and South Lake Union areas.